

Dear Minister and staff of the Australian Marine Parks Management Planning section at the Department of the Environment and Energy

This is a public submission to comment on the five draft management plans to manage 44 Australian Marine Parks over the next ten years.

1. The draft management plans need to be revised and should not be implemented in their current form.
2. Overall, the draft management plans provide significantly less protection for the Australian marine environment and its unique biota than was proposed when the Australian Government established 40 new marine parks in 2012.
3. Notably, the draft management plans, if implemented in their current form, would see:
  - a. substantial reductions in the areas placed within Australian Marine Parks;
  - b. removal of important and vulnerable habitats from Australian Marine Parks;
  - c. substantial reductions in the area classified as National Park Zone (IUCN category II);
  - d. substantial increases on the areas where extractive activities can occur.
4. The justification for the weaker protections proposed in the draft management plans. In particular, the scientific basis for the changes in planning (eg the location and geographic extent of Australian Marine Parks) and zoning (eg the reduction of areas classified as National Park Zone and the increase in areas where extractive activities can occur) is unclear.
5. The draft management plans indicate that the preparation of the plans was based on best available science and information on marine parks and approaches to marine park. However, this claim is clearly inconsistent with the much weaker protections proposed in the draft management plans (compared to the original 2012 protections).
6. An object of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* is to promote ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources. Section 3A of the Act then identifies five 'principles of ecologically sustainable development' including the principle that 'decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations'. The decision to weaken the protections provided for in 2012 when the new Australian Marine Parks were established proposed is inconsistent with this principle. This is so because, on an objective assessment, the proposed changes appear to have been made to support narrow economic considerations at the expense of broader social, environmental and equitable considerations. The clear favouring of narrow economic interests, to the short-term benefit of a small number of private stakeholders, is not a decision-making process that effectively integrates long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations.
7. The draft management plans need to be revised to implement protections that are at as least as strong as those that were indicated in 2012 when the new Australian Marine Marks were proposed.

Please feel free to contact me with any queries.

Kind regards,

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